



## Mastering Technical Sales

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*John Care, Managing Director*

## The Elevator Pitch

### Are You Hitting All The Right Buttons?

Imagine you are just leaving a meeting, and end up on the elevator face to face with the CIO of that company you've been trying to break into for months. What do you say? You have 30 seconds to give your pitch and make that CIO curious enough to extend the relationship. Ready? Go!

An Elevator Pitch (EP) is a brief statement about who you are, what your business is, and why it is unique and special. Your target is that executive, decision-maker or audience who could potentially do business with you, if only they knew you existed. Everyone needs an EP, whether personally or professionally. So read on to learn how to punch the right buttons to gain the attention of your captive audience and *lift* yourself above the competition.

### Basic Structure of the Elevator Pitch

Your pitch should be short, sharp and to the point - just enough to promote a feeling of curiosity in the recipient.

1. **Short.** Plan on your EP being between 30 and 60 seconds long. That is about 75 words, or enough to fill a 3 by 5 index card. Writing out your EP is a wonderful way to focus in on what's important to others,
2. **Sharp.** What is unique about you, your company or your idea? Think about two or three different ways to get that point across, depending upon the audience. Don't do this on the fly, plan it beforehand. Should your product be visual or multi-media (think pink footballs) have it or at least a picture/sample available.

3. **To the point.** There are many ways to lay out an EP. Here is my favorite
  - a. Two sentences about you or the team/company you represent
  - b. One sentence about the technology, idea or service
  - c. One sentence about your target market
  - d. One sentence on the audience WIIFM (What's In It For Me)
  - e. One sentence on what you want
  - f. Repeat name and finish with a powerful question

### **When To Use the Elevator Pitch**

There are many opportunities to use an Elevator Pitch. 99.9% of Elevator Pitches are used in a sales situation. You may be selling yourself in an interview, your services to a company, or your idea to a supervisor or even an investor.

1. **Personal EPs.** Anytime someone of importance asks you "tell me a little about yourself" - that is an opportunity to give your personal EP. Just as you should always have a current resume, you should have a current EP as well.
2. **Social EP.** I call this the cocktail party EP, which assumes the audience is totally clueless about your business and value proposition. There is a school of thought that this style should be simple enough to be directed at your mother.
3. **Business EP.** The classic EP. You have 30 seconds to make that CIO or VIP curious enough to take the next step.
4. **Idea EP.** We all have ideas about how to make our business run better, for a new marketing campaign or an innovative new product. Prepare a pitch, so that when you have a chance to influence that VIP, it becomes a business EP.

### **Delivering The Pitch**

So let us assume that you know all about maintaining eye-contact, speaking clearly at an appropriate volume, injecting some energy, standing up straight and all the standard non-verbal communications hints and tips. What should you actually do?

1. **Practice makes perfect.** Practice your delivery, so that it is smooth, with no "um-er" fillers and totally devoid of basically, actually and marketing buzzwords. Don't become so practiced to the extent that it sounds like you are reading a script. Strange as it may sound, practice a couple of "ad-lib" variations too!
2. **My name is.** Although you may start the pitch with your name or company - make sure you conclude your pitch with the same information (either verbally, or via business card or slide). Also, slow down and enunciate your name v-e-r-y clearly - you may be used to speaking your name, others aren't used to listening to it. Even when I spell out my last name, C-A-R-E, 50% of people starting writing down a "K".
3. **Be specific.** Instead of mouthing generic phrases such as "*I'm a great problem-solver*", "*we help secure IT assets*" or "*world-class flexible architecture*", use words which describe exactly what you do, and where possible use numbers or references. Try "*I improved our demo processes and doubled our win-rate*" or "*we've increased the performance of Oracle Financials by 50% at companies like...*"
4. **The end game.** Once you have delivered your EP, what are you going to do next? There is an old adage; "*If you don't ask, you don't get.*" So what do you want to happen as a next step - exchange business cards, an invitation to continue the conversation, an introduction to someone else? Decide beforehand, so you can ask for that next step if it is not offered. After all, you are in sales!

## Summary

Does an Elevator Pitch work? Absolutely! I once gave an EP to Bill Gates (actually in an elevator in Cambridge, Massachusetts) which resulted in Microsoft sponsoring a program for my employer at the time. Write one down, practice in front of the mirror, and then like any good boy scout; "*be prepared*".

**“There is only one IF in LIFE - between the L and the E”**

*Ack: Ron Andrews*

Talking Points is a monthly column authored by John Care, Managing Director of Mastering Technical Sales. For more information on this and other Sales Engineering topics visit the website at [www.masteringtechnicalsales.com](http://www.masteringtechnicalsales.com).

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